



restoreing dc

A Monthly Update for Businesses and Consumers in the District of Columbia

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★ ★ ★
Anthony A. Williams
Mayor

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reSTORE DC
www.restoredc.dc.gov | 202 727-5208

THE THIRD PLACE

by Tom Litke

Welcome to reSTOREing DC's latest issue, the place to find out about topics that concern the District's neighborhoods. We look to engage the neighbors, merchants, and developers and we cover the topics that encompass the District's renaissance, and what you can do to be a part of it. Commercial revitalization is the subject but quality of life is the vision. We discuss strategies that employ tools from the four corners of revitalization: economic development, community design, event promotions and community organizing.

Americans have forty percent less free time today than at the end of World War II. For many, the remaining free time is spent watching television. But others are looking for more. In fact, most of the people who are flocking to DC, are doing so with plans of getting out of their homes, meeting people, and enjoying city life (not suburban-life).

Ray Oldenburg, author of *The Great Good Place*, writes that contemporary suburbs don't have the density of population to support places where people regularly gather outside of home and work.

Older neighborhoods, on the other hand, still have plenty of gathering places. But what makes one place more of a gathering place than another? Having studied the question for years, Oldenburg offers eight characteristics:

1. They are "neutral ground." They do not become a club for only one clique of people.
2. They are "levelers" that bring everybody down to earth. Once inside, everyone is equal.
3. Conversation is the main activity, whether the place is a barber shop or a pharmacy.
4. Customers linger as long as they please, which raises the likelihood that you'll run into someone you know...who then introduces you to someone you don't know.
5. They are anchored by a corps of regulars.
6. They rely on word-of-mouth marketing, not



salesmanship. Making money does not *appear* to be their number one objective.

7. The mood is playful, never too serious or depressed.
8. They are an escape from the worries of work and home life—a home away from home—a *third* place.

When the national Main Street program surveyed its 1,600 or so member communities recently, the number one trend in Main Street districts nationwide was the opening of more third places. Having tired of the formulaic chain restaurants out on highways reachable only by a car, growing numbers of people are hungry for an authentic Main Street experience.

Now that you know what third places are, we will tell you why you want them and where to find them. We will also interview the owner of one of the most successful third places in the DC metropolitan area and find out what makes his two 3rd places such comfortable places to go, stay, and enjoy. Plus we will learn about his *third* third place that is coming soon.

Tom Litke works for reSTORE DC/DC Main Streets as an advisor to the DC Main Street programs. Prior to his work in DC, he directed a nationally-recognized Main Street program in Boston.

FIND YOUR THIRD PLACE

Here are a few of DC's third places and their Main Street locations.

BARRACKS ROW

Eastern Market on weekends 7th/8th & D St, SE

Capitol Hill Bikes 709 8th St, SE/544-4234

Wrenn's Barber Shop 1005 8th St, SE/546-2300

Adams Mill Bar & Grill 1313 Adams Mill Rd, NW/332-9577

L'Enfant Café 2000 18th St, NW/319-1800

GATEWAY GEORGIA AVENUE

Tropicana Jamaican Restaurant 7812 Georgia Ave, NW/541-9060

Charlie's Jazz Club 7307 Georgia Ave, NW/726-3567

14TH AND U STREET

Nema Café 1334 U St, NW/667-3215

Hamburger Mary's 1337 14th St, NW/232-7010

Sparky's Café 1313 Adams Mill Rd, NW/332-9577

H STREET

Hillman's Barbershop 1106 H St, NE/396-9640

Smokey's Barbershop 1338 H St, NE/396-2377

Phish Tea Café 1335 H St, NE/396-2345

Rose's Dream 1370 H St, NE

DUPONT CIRCLE

Mimi's American Bistro 2120 P St, NW/464-6464

Sunday Farmer's Market 9 am–1 pm

Axis Salon 1509 Connecticut Ave/234-1166

MOUNT PLEASANT

Don Jaime 3209 Mt. Pleasant St, NW/232-3875

Heller's Bakery 3221 Mt. Pleasant St, NW, 265-1190

Dos Gringos 3116 Mt. Pleasant St, NW/462-1159

ANACOSTIA

Cole's Café 1918 MLK, Jr. Ave, SE

Kutt-n-Upp Barbershop, 1433 Good Hope Rd, SE/563-9477

14TH STREET HEIGHTS

Mocha Hut 4706 14th St, NW/829-6200

BROOKLAND

Island Jim's 901 Monroe St, NE/529-4002

ADAMS MORGAN

Tryst Coffeehouse Bar & Lounge 2459 18th St, NW/232-5500

SHAW

Florida Avenue Grill 1110 Florida Ave, NW/265-1586

Warehouse Cafe 1021 7th St, NW/783-3933

10 REASONS YOU NEED LOCAL BUSINESSES TO BE A 3RD PLACE:

For the community:

- 1 Community members that know each other, watch out for each other
- 2 Foot traffic is an indirect security system
- 3 To put your neighborhood on the map—third places create buzz
- 4 Having a “hidden” ‘hood be listed in the arts and entertainment section of the paper builds neighborhood’s credibility
- 5 Socially flexible places increase community diversity and tolerance

For the business:

- 6 They are more in demand than ever: the increasing number of self-employed want to get out of the house to work and play
- 7 There are less traditional 3rd places nationwide (social clubs, bowling leagues, etc)
- 8 With traffic and congestion, people are seeking places that are within walking distance
- 9 DC’s transient/professional population needs them—Craig’s list for activity partners in DC is greater than any other city
- 10 Because if you don’t become a 3rd place, someone else will

For Further Reading To find out more about third places, read Ray Oldenburg’s book *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts and How They Get You Through the Day*. It came out 14 years ago, but the observations are still applicable. In fact, they are indispensable to people trying to build a sense of community and a sense of place in their neighborhood.

IN THE TRENCHES | GETTING TO KNOW OUR MAIN STREET BUSINESSES

Constantine Stavropoulos knows *third places* well. In 1998, he created what has become one of the most successful Third Places in the DC Metropolitan area, Tryst on Adams Morgan Main Street. He then opened The Diner nearby and he will soon open his third place in Woodley Park, not coincidentally called, “The Third Place.” We tracked him down in Woodley Park to get his insights. They are excerpted here. For the entire interview, go to restoredc.dc.gov.

RDC: WHAT DOES “THE THIRD PLACE” MEAN TO YOU?

I first read about the Third Place in the 90’s in a *New York Times* article called “All Together, Yet All alone.” They talked about the concept of having your home, your office, and then a third place that balances out your life.

A third place appeals to everyone. I used to go to Bob Manini’s Diner [in Arlington] at about 5:00 in the morning to get geared up to build **Tryst**. There would be a truck driver sitting next to a business person sitting next to a student. A third place brings people together who wouldn’t normally be together. It is sort of a hodgepodge, a fishbowl where you can get everyone to mix together.

Hours of operation are important to a third place. There are so many different people with so many different schedules that to be open only a certain amount of time would limit the ability for someone to go to there.

A third place is what it is. There’s no theme to Tryst or the Diner. . . And by not theming them, they evolve. Our Woodley café will evolve too. People will fill up the space and define it.

I used to do a lot of traveling and I would go into little towns and in each little town, I would go to the diner. In 20 minutes, I pretty much knew everything there was to know about that little town, as opposed to a tourist who could spend four days there and never know anything about the town. So, a third place is not only a place where people can go and get away from the home and the office but it also helps to define that area.

I wouldn’t say that Tryst and the Diner have defined Adams Morgan but they’ve helped bring out who the people are and what is there. I’m hoping that Woodley Park is going to do the same. It’s going to help to bring out Woodley Park. Think about it. . . what is Woodley Park? As far as I used to think, Woodley Park is a place with a bunch of restaurants that is right down from the zoo. And you go there and you eat and then you get up and you go somewhere else. I didn’t know anything about the daytime business and I never imagined when I was doing the Woodley Park study that there was a neighborhood out there. And later I discovered that there IS a neighborhood out there, there are people like you [The interviewer lives a block away from Constantine’s future café location and anxiously awaits its opening!]



—Interview by Barry Margeson



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801 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
www.restoredc.dc.gov